

DAVID A. WILSON, *Politics in Thailand*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1962, xv+307 p.

In view of the important role Thailand plays in international society, it is not too much to say that Area Studies are unduly neglecting this country. There seem to be some understandable reasons why social scientists engaged in Area Studies tend to be unenthusiastic about Thailand.

One of the reasons must be that, being so loosely structured a society as not to be susceptible of description in terms of any sophisticated theory, this country does not appeal to the academic drive of those who are interested in improving their methodological weapons. Another explanation is connected with the difficulties they meet in learning the Thai language. Owing to this unhappy situation, the law of scarcity value still applies to the literature on Thai society. That is, on one hand, even a mediocre article which hints at some aspect of Thailand can be accepted as a precious reference without much regard to its quality and, on the other, an excellent achievement never fails to make an immense contribution to, or in other words, cause an unfathomable influence upon, all the students of Thai problems. In this context, *Politics in Thailand* is a typical instance in the latter category.

This book is one of the rare fruits of high quality that American Area Studies have borne in the field of studies of Thailand. Its appearance means a decisive rise in the standard of excellence required in works on Thailand. Prof. Wilson has not published many articles on Thai politics, but he was highly reputed as a first-class expert in the subject. This latest work of his has served not to discount his reputation but to endorse the widely shared trust in his ability.

*Politics in Thailand* is the very first book ever published which has succeeded in revealing the structural frame of political power of Thailand in its entirety. Prof. Wilson's purpose in writing this book was, as he says in the preface, "to analyze the general characteristics of political relationship" in Thailand and, throughout, "the analysis is focused on the structure of power rather than on the development of policy." He tries to isolate and bring into relief those elements in Thai politics which constitute recurrent patterns of institutional behaviour. He emphasizes the theme of the interplay of cultural, social, and legal forces which, unforeseen by the participant, has resulted in both gradual and sudden changes. The contents of the book are apparently constituted on a tripartite basis. The first three chapters are meant to present the historical, economic, and socio-cultural background of Thai politics (the first two chapters are, though not exactly congruent, a reproduction of two articles previously published). The following five chapters from IV to VIII, which starts with the impressive passage, "The foundation of political life in Thailand is the clique, with a leader as the nucleus. A clique is fundamentally a face-to-face group because the characteristic ties binding it together are personal in nature—ties of personal love and loyalty based on the relationship between the leader and the follower", are meant

to present the locus of political power as well as its main characteristics. The final chapter, entitled "Coups and Constitutions" deals with the manner in which political change occurs in Thai politics.

Prof. Wilson points out that none of the monographs or articles so far published "makes any attempt to analyze more than a few of the elements which make up the Thai political system." He seems to have intended to draw out the picture of the Thai political system in its totality. He spent four years in all in Thailand. During these years, he made personal observations as well as systematic investigation, along with bookish work based on Thai literary sources. In this connection, it is worth-while mentioning that Prof. Jones, who was his instructor in Thai language at Cornell, proudly testified to his linguistic gifts upon the reviewer's casual inquiry, in Bangkok. Prof. Wilson's efforts have resulted in a signal success.

All over this book are scattered brilliant insights into the dynamic aspects of the power structure of Thai politics. Those insights could possibly serve to lead to as many more specialized studies. The following are some of the parts which might be of interest to any reader. The section "Groups and their Attitudes" (pp. 57-71) in Chapter II is a significant achievement in educing an empirical idea of the ruling class in Thai society. And the analysis of administrative autonomy, for which Prof. Wilson has coined the dextrous phrase "bureaucratic capitalism," is one of the most exciting passages in the book, though, to any reader's regret, not more than a few pages are spared for the analysis. (pp. 184-185) His cynicism in regard to the political functions fulfilled by the military (pp. 191-192) as well as by the national assembly (Chapter VII) will certainly win the sympathy of readers. But Prof. Wilson's originality manifests itself at its highest when he introduces the idea of "Khana" which, in his opinion, is a term which should be taken to refer to the exclusive informal group which occupies the core of political power as trustee for the attainment of the purposes of the coup. Some other scholars had applied group theory to elucidate the process of the shift of leadership in Thai politics, but Prof. Wilson's idea of "Khana" is far more advanced than those rather perfunctory theories in that it clarifies empirically the pattern of the formation and the recruitment of membership of a "Khana."

There is no doubt that Prof. Wilson has successfully secured a peerless status as a student of Thai politics by this publication. It would hardly be possible to make a negative comment on this book unless the commentator had the same degree of scholarly commitment to Thailand. It is also difficult to make any comment on it in a way beneficial to Prof. Wilson and edifying to other students of Thai politics. (In this connection, nobody would agree that the exchange of comments and retorts between Prof. Dahling and Prof. Wilson in the *Journal of Asian Studies* was beneficial in any way.) Actually, Prof. Wilson's aim of analysing the structure of power in Thailand is thoroughly fulfilled.

Nonetheless, the reviewer presumes that readers could raise one or two

questions to Prof. Wilson in the same manner as pupils in a class like to question their teacher for more interesting but rather irrelevant knowledge.

There seems to be an assumption on which most of the students of Thai politics act when pursuing their studies. This is the assumption that the structure of Thai politics has not undergone any fundamental change ever since 1932 when the Constitutional Revolution took place. This assumption is indeed justifiable as long as a continuity is manifest in the main traits of Thai politics. However, once a shadow of discontinuity falls upon Thai politics, an *a priori* assumption of that sort must lose its absolute merit. It is quite unfortunate that we have no good work on the political history of Thailand since 1932. Prof. Wilson's analysis of the political structure suggests that he shares the same assumption to a considerable degree. He does not answer some elementary questions any reader might conceive, such as: In what way is Thai politics transforming itself? Didn't the appearance of a new-type autocrat like Sarit mean something in this connection? Prof. Wilson has also failed to touch upon such topics as the social character or personality of Thai politicians, the impact of international tension on Thai politics, the adaptability of Thai politicians to the trend of international society, and so forth, all of which are doubtless of prime importance with regard to structural transformation in Thai politics.

There is another point which seems somewhat unsatisfactory in this book. Prof. Wilson underlines the significance of a moral view of politics which teaches that "issues of politics are moral issues." However, his basic moral attitude towards Thai politics is not shown clearly throughout the book. The lack of integrity in interpreting the political role played by the King may have something to do with this point. If Prof. Wilson had keener moral sensitivity, it would have had the effect of making his analysis sharper rather than that of the scientific objectivity of his analysis.

There are a few minor questionable points. (If Prof. Wilson transcribed *Praphas* and *Vajiravud* into *Prapht* and *Wachirawut* respectively, why did he not transcribe *Pramoj* and *Ananda* into *Pramot* and *Ananta* respectively?) However, these minor points are of no significance when we consider the unremitting industry of Prof. Wilson in producing this excellent masterpiece. This book is obviously destined to be ranked as a prime classic among all literature on Thai politics. It will assuredly be a sort of guide-book for all students in the same field and a target standard which they will one day be expected to surpass. Finally, a second big monograph by Prof. Wilson is eagerly awaited by us all. (*Tōru Yano*)

KIYOSHI MATSUI ed., *Kindai Nihon Bōeki-shi* (A Modern History of Japanese Foreign Trade), 3 vols., Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1959~1963, 1,104 p.

Whenever the economic growth of the so-called underdeveloped countries